

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Essay Contest – 2002

Second Prize: Lauren Ressler

The Forever Race

I am just a plain girl. I am white and of European descent. I am an atheist, but I have friends who are African American, Asian, Hispanic, Russian, Iranian and some from places I'd never even heard of until I met them. I know so many people with religions including Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and some newer religions that I'm not familiar with. All my friends have the same things I do, more or less, some people have different things in their households but that's not what I mean, I mean they are allowed the same rights as I am like freedom, an education, a chance to do what they love through music and dance programs and last but not least a chance to make friends with whom ever they please.

I live in a society surrounded by thousands of people who can have neighbors from all around the world and who have friends with different jobs and backgrounds. Our society would not be anything like it is today without brave souls like Dr. Martin Luther King Junior who dare to make a difference. These people have the gift of being able to look inside people and see the truth. People like Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. King Jr., Anne Frank, Mother Teresa, Rosa Parks, John Lewis, Ben Frazier, and so many countless more working to keep ignorance and prejudice from dominating society.

Everyone in this proud country owes their freedom to those who give time, effort and sometimes their lives so we will not be burdened with injustice, racism and other horrific notions that plague our world like genocide. I thank every soul that has stood up and backed just causes. Now we can touch a button and kill millions without looking into their faces and seeing their families, we can explode things and burn things and who knows what else. We need to do more to love, we need to do more to let others lift the veil of hatred and fear from their eyes and truly see. See the laughing children, the shining sun, the irregular shape of a flower that has pushed its way out through a sidewalk crack and see a path to the future.

We stand at a crossroads in time. Choose one path and we can set aside our differences and fulfill the dreams that hard workers have laid in our path. Choose the other road and we will not understand each other and that is what Dr. King says on page 33 in *Stride Toward Freedom*. "Men often hate each other because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don't know each other; they don't know each other because they can not communicate; they can not communicate because they are separated." This quote stood out to me so much because it is so sensible.

We don't have a big problem with racism in this country anymore though the effects of the segregation still linger. We need to now focus on the alienation of America to other nations. To go forward with hope we need friends everywhere. We can't make it alone and the rest of the world must join in the fight to make our future a great one. My dream

of a forever race is one that is joined by the sheer love of life. We weep for every death and sing for every life. We can invest our strength in building environmentally safe every things from cars to electricity. No more lives will be used in vast armies. We can end poverty, stop the destruction of natural treasures and learn to be at peace with the loss of loved ones. That is my Utopia.

We will learn from the past and use non-violent protests to prove our point, such as going on marches, boycotting goods and resources and giving speeches in public places so more people will hear what you have to say. All that matters is the strength of will, not the strength of the fist that tries to hold back change. Change is inevitable and good will come out no matter who or what tries to stop it. At first it is hard to understand why Martin Luther King Jr. was willing to extend a hand of friendship to white Americans even the racism tainted Ku Klux Klan. He did it because you must face your foes and communicate and only then can you learn acceptance and even love.

Alas if we were all children again. Children lack the bias that is intertwined into a growing persons life by outside forces and opinions. The world would be only curiosity, enjoying the moment and not waiting for tomorrow to do what we want if we were all children again. Love means nothing to a child and that is because everything is love. We are all born with the innate gift of seeing inside the shell because when we are very small we don't judge by colors all we can see is the light behind the figure.

Bibliography

Stride Toward Freedom by Martin Luther King Jr., www.stop-the-hate.org/body.html